

oblivious idiots by nessonmain

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Summary: Sometimes, Dustin can't comprehend just how oblivious his friends can be. More specifically, he can't believe how oblivious Mike and Will are. He's managed to keep quiet ever since he found out, but there've been so many times he's come close to yelling at them to just get their shit together and kiss already, stop being idiots, guys! / companion piece to sall(wm). byler.

oblivious idiots

Warning for implied/referenced self harm.

Sometimes, Dustin can't comprehend just *how* oblivious his friends can be. More specifically, he can't believe how oblivious *Mike* and *Will* are. He's managed to keep quiet ever since he found out, but there've been so many times he's come close to yelling at them to *just get their shit together and kiss already, stop being idiots, guys!* Somehow, he's never actually said it to their faces, and he just ends up giving and receiving exasperated looks from the others.

Dustin was 11 years old when he first noticed how close they are. They were sitting in Mike's basement on a cold winter day, Dustin sprawled out on the floor, rambling on about anything and everything that came to his mind just to fill the silence. Lucas, back against the couch, was listening to Dustin and would interject every now and then with an edge to his voice that almost exclusively came out when his brain was too jumbled and he couldn't bounce off Dustin's words as easily as normal. Usually, Dustin would trail off for a few minutes, just to give Lucas a break, and then start back up either where he left off or switching to a new topic entirely, but on that day, his brain seemed to be set to high, he couldn't stop talking even if he wanted to (which he didn't, really).

His eyes darted around the room for what seemed like the hundredth time, before settling on something he hadn't paid any mind to before; Mike and Will were sitting next to each other on the couch – that wasn't what was *weird*, it was more that they were both squeezed onto one cushion and were touching in almost every place possible. Now, affection wasn't rare in the party, but, thing is, Dustin himself was usually the one who initiated it. He considered himself an affectionate kid; he liked holding hands and hugs way more than most kids his age, and he never even *tried* to hold back from showing it around his friends. He wouldn't hesitate to sling an arm around them, giving out hugs left and right. Mike and Will would always reciprocate with a laugh, while Lucas usually shrugged him off quickly (although there have been a few times where he'd let Dustin

linger for a few moments longer than usual).

The two of them would reciprocate, sure, but they never really hugged first. Sure, sometimes they look at Dustin with a pleading shine in their eyes, and it's not like they don't touch people if they can help it; Mike often ends up planting a hand on the shoulder of whoever's standing closest to him with no thought put into it whatsoever. They just tended to save it for when it's needed, like when Will showed up at Mike's doorstep crying because Lonnie had slapped him, or when Dustin had tried to sneak out of the room while the others were talking about dads. So, yeah, you could say it kind of puzzled Dustin to see them curled close together like it's something they've done a million times. (It didn't occur to him until later that they probably *have* done it a million times, he's just never paid enough attention to it to notice.)

Dustin hadn't noticed he'd stopped running his mouth until Lucas' voice broke through his thoughts, a call of his name with a worried tone leading him to look at where Lucas sat. Lucas was sitting straight up, brows furrowed and lips pursed. Dustin was silent for a moment, eyes flicking back and forth between Lucas and the two on the couch (who were now staring straight at him, gazes concerned, and Dustin never thought he'd want to melt into the floor, but he was wrong) before he gave his best fake smile that he doubts fooled anyone, alongside a weak excuse of "sorry, I was just... uh, I just lost my train of thought." He's certain none of them believed him, but none of them brought it up so Dustin counted it as a win.

He remembers pulling Lucas aside a few days later at recess and whispering, "do they *know* they like each other?" Lucas hadn't known what Dustin was on about until he jerked his head toward the two. Mike and Will were sitting on the swingset, looking at each other with such adoration that Dustin kind of wanted to barf. *That* was what he'd been thinking of as he tried to piece together just what the hell was going on between the two; their eyes would always linger on the other, smitten smiles on their faces when they thought no one was looking. Dustin couldn't believe he hadn't figured it out before then – he's never been the most observant, but he likes to think he's at least somewhat good with emotions, so he definitely felt a little stupid at the time.

Realization had washed over Lucas' face before it quickly morphed into a look of exhaustion, and he sighed, shaking his head. "If I know Mike as well as I think I do, he probably just thinks it's what normal friends feel. Will's probably gonna figure it out first, but I'd give him at least 2 months without any help." Lucas sounded so completely *done* that Dustin couldn't hold back a snort.

From that moment on, it had somehow become their *thing*; whispering to each other at the lunch table, shared eye rolls every time Mike and Will did something even remotely romantic. It had brought them a little closer, even, and Lucas wasn't so quick to shrug off Dustin's arm. Dustin had been wishing he could give them a nudge in the right direction, but Lucas wasn't so eager to help, claiming his parents said "love must happen naturally." Dustin thought that was kind of bullshit, and these two idiots would never get anywhere without someone stepping in, but, for once, he didn't say what he was thinking.

One day, Will asked if they could hang out. *Alone*.

Dustin had been confused, but he said yes, of course – he'd never turn down time with his friends if he didn't have to. And there they were, walking their bikes through the woods, making their way to the quarry even though they never agreed on a destination. Will looked troubled the whole way, and Dustin had been struggling to figure out a way to break the ice that sat between them when Will broke it for him.

"Dustin?" His voice was weak, but it was enough to startle Dustin into stopping in his tracks. Will stopped with him, staring at him with a glint of fear in his eyes. Dustin was stricken with worry – sure, Will *did* get scared easily, but so did Dustin, really – to see his friend so scared. Will almost always had a good reason for being afraid.

"What's up, dude?" Dustin asked, trying to seem far more relaxed than he actually was. He didn't want to get Will even *more* scared.

Will's lip started trembling as he sucked in a deep breath. "I-I, um..." he trailed off and closed his eyes, and out of the corner of his eyes Dustin could see Will's hands curling into tight fists. Dustin had the urge to place a hand on Will's shoulder, but at the same time, he

thought it would be better to let Will spit it out on his own. "Uh, well, I like b-boys." Will's voice had grown quieter, the last word nearly a whisper, and Dustin had to lean closer to even understand what he was saying.

The first thought that passed through Dustin's head was *holy shit, you finally admitted it*. Of course, he didn't *say* that, because despite the fact that sometimes he couldn't quite read the atmosphere very well, he could tell that this was *not* the right time. So, instead, he just gave Will a smile that he knew looked overly fond and a quick "cool."

Will's head snapped up. "Cool?" He said it as if the word was something new, foreign, and he had the most disbelieving expression on his face that Dustin had ever seen him wear.

Dustin's smile widened, and he reached out, deeming it appropriate enough, and slung an arm over Will's shoulders. "Yeah, cool. Did'ya think I'd care?" He shook Will playfully.

He could see Will's nose wrinkle as he tried to hold back a smile. "I guess... I didn't really know how you'd react. I dunno, it's stupid."

"Nah. Not stupid," Dustin pushed away with a parting hair ruffle, and he snorted at the sight of Will, face twisted up as he tried to pat his hair flat. Dustin picked his bike up off the ground – he didn't even remember when it had fell – and the two continued to the quarry in a comfortable silence. As soon as they got there, Dustin plopped down on the ground and blurted out, "So, you got your eye on anyone?" Will didn't respond, so Dustin glanced up at him, only to find himself desperately fighting back laughter. Will stood stock still, his face flushed red, expression blank apart from the slightest upward pull of his lips.

Dustin just stared for a moment, before clearing his throat. He watched as Will snapped to his senses, and Will started to stammer out a sentence but then changed his mind. "A certain frog faced boy, maybe?" He prompted, and was simultaneously amused and sorry at the grimace that graced Will's face as he sunk to the ground, hands coming up to cover his face.

"Is it that obvious?"

"Not really. Well, I mean, Lucas and I figured it out, but I don't think anyone else has."

"Okay. Good, okay." Will dropped his hands to rest on his lap. "Um, do you- do you know if *he's* noticed?" The pleading look on his face made Dustin want to spill the beans right then and there, but he keeps it in – Mike's pride would probably be crushed if Dustin were to intervene.

"I'm pretty sure he hasn't – he's as oblivious as yo-" Dustin caught his mistake mid word, and he held out the sound as his brain tried to catch up, "-ooour mom. Yeah. Your mom." The almost-joke was stilted, and Dustin cursed his awful acting skills when Will's eyes narrowed.

"As oblivious as what, Dustin?"

"Nope. Nope nope nope, I'm not doing this." He scrambled to his feet, rushing over to his bike to pick it up. He could hear Will picking himself off the ground behind him, but he ignored it in favour of hopping on his bike and pedaling away.

Will was chasing him, calling "oblivious as *what*, Dustin?!" He knew Will would catch up eventually, it was inevitable, but he'd take all the time he wanted as he tried to figure out a smooth way to change topics entirely. (Okay, maybe not *smooth*, but convincing. Well, maybe not that, either.)

After that incident, it felt like they were somehow even *more* obvious about it – it was like they finally turned on the lights and now the signs were flashing neon colours right in front of Dustin's face. He could see the way they'd steal glances at each other, the way the most lovesick grins would grow on their faces sometimes. Over time, Dustin noticed Mike becoming clearer, his actions seemingly more intentional, and he got his hopes up that they'd figure it out sooner rather than later so he could finally stop watching them pine after each other like a dog for its owner.

Then, in November of 1983, Will went missing, and Dustin had to watch Mike fall in love with someone else.

Don't get him wrong, he loves El just as much as everyone else, but seeing Mike throwing those looks at her that he had previously reserved for Will and Will *only* just felt wrong to him. He felt like his heart was breaking for his missing friend, who would return only to see Mike loving someone else. It was breaking for Mike, because no matter how much he loved El, Dustin could *see* that it wasn't as intense, he could tell they'd be better off as friends. They barely knew each other – granted, they'd gone through some rough shit together, and they'd definitely formed a bond, but considering that Eleven didn't know what a friend was, she probably didn't have a handle on romance. Lucas had said it was because she was the only girl who'd looked at him without disgust in her eyes. Dustin thought it was because of that, but also because Mike probably thought he was *supposed* to like girls, not boys. Mike had grown attached quickly, but Dustin never quite saw the shine in his eyes that he had when he looked at Will.

Nonetheless, he had *liked* El, she was his friend and she'd saved his life several times, so, naturally, he was crushed when she disappeared. Lucas, Mike, and Dustin himself found themselves moping in the short time between when she killed the Demogorgon and when Will woke up, and Dustin watched with bleary eyes as Lucas fell asleep in the waiting room chair. He glanced at Mike only to see alert eyes looking back at him. He tried to murmur out a sleepy "can I?" He wasn't sure if he had actually said it or not until Mike nodded slowly. Dustin's head lolled to the side, coming to rest on something boney that his sleep deprived brain couldn't quite place, and the last thing he heard was a whispered promise (*I'll keep watch*) from Mike before he drifted into sleep.

The nap that day was dreamless, something that rarely ever happened to him. His best guess was that his brain was sapped dry of imagination due to all the weird shit that had happened in reality. And so, the next thing he remembers is that he was roughly shook awake and immediately shoved off of his makeshift pillow, aka Lucas' shoulder (whoops). But Mike was saying that *Will's awake*, and the two are scrambling out of their chairs to follow Mike as he sprints around nurses and doctors, Dustin calling an apology behind him to one Mike had nearly ran into. He saw Will, Will's awake and he's *alive*, and Dustin couldn't help pulling Lucas and Mike off of him, *he*

was so happy Will's okay.

Lucas and Dustin took turns telling Will what had gone down while he was gone, but then he was coughing, and Dustin's heart skipped a beat. Mike reached out with a soft "you okay?"

Will turned his head to look at Mike as he said, "It got me. The Demogorgon." The words were small, quiet, and accompanied by the heart monitors steady beeping. Dustin hadn't heard the phrase, but he could tell by the way Mike's face shifted as he replied that Mike recognized it. The words were meant for Mike, and Dustin glanced at Lucas to see if he'd noticed, too. Lucas raised his eyebrows just a tad, and Dustin quickly turned back to the conversation. Mike was telling Will about El, and he trailed off, so Dustin jumped in, trying to keep the mood high for now. This was their happy reunion time, damn it, there'd be time to mope later. Mike had looked at him and then Lucas with a grateful gleam in his eyes and Dustin knew that he'd done the right thing.

Mike kept calling.

He wasn't calling for Dustin, or Lucas, or Will. He was calling for Eleven. Dustin was pretty sure it was daily, and he knew he should probably stop Mike, but they (excluding Mike, of course) had gathered together on day 73 to discuss a plan of action. They had reasoned it was probably helping Mike in some way to keep calling, so they never ended up confronting him about it. It's not that Dustin was *certain* El was dead, but he wasn't certain she was alive either, and if she was, then she could take care of herself. She flipped a truck over their heads, she *killed* the Demogorgon, so, yeah, you could say Dustin knew she was a badass. He also knew that Mike was going to worry for her regardless – it's just the kind of guy he is.

Mike's mood lightened quite a bit after Will had been released from the hospital, and Dustin could swear the happiest he saw Mike over the year was when he was with Will. They pressed against each other like they did before, held hands more often than ever, and Mike wouldn't hesitate to wrap his arm around Will's shoulders. Will, short as he was, folded perfectly under a now-taller Mike's arm. A few times, Dustin and Lucas had entire conversations using only expressions and sheer willpower while the other two were staring at

each other.

One day in late June, Mike went to school wearing a giant sweater. Dustin would normally excuse it as a fashion choice, but it had been getting warmer as summer grew near, and Mike was probably sweating up a storm in that thing. He'd been confused, tugging at Mike's sleeve curiously as Lucas joked about how you couldn't see how skinny he was under all that fabric, and Dustin saw what he thought to be relief cross Mike's face, but then Mike noticed Dustin pulling at his sleeve and he jerked his arm back, face gone pale and eyes scared. There was silence as the three boys stood there, Mike trying to calm down, Lucas' mouth hung open, and Dustin himself with pursed lips and furrowed brows with his gaze fixed on Mike's arm.

"Hey guys," Will's voice sounded behind them, and all three pairs of eyes snapped to him, "What's up with the sweater, Mike?"

Mike stood, eyes flicking to Lucas, Will, Dustin, and back again. He opened his mouth as if ready to explain, but his breath hitched in his throat and he simply said instead, "I- I have to go the bathroom." He speed-walked quickly into the school building, leaving three confused boys behind him.

Lucas stared after him. "What's wrong with him?"

"I don't know, maybe he has a rash or something on his arms and he's embarrassed," Dustin supplied, only to receive a light slap on the arm.

"I don't think he'd be panicking that much about a rash, *dumbass*."

Will was silent, still looking at the doors Mike had disappeared into, eyes narrowed and brows furrowed. He swallowed through a lump in his throat, and turned back to Dustin and Lucas as the conversation derailed to the arcade (like usual).

"Do Mike and Will, y'know... like each other?" Max had said as they watched the two walk away, Will leaning a good portion of his weight onto Mike. She looked between Lucas and Dustin expectantly, eyebrows raised.

Dustin was, frankly, overwhelmed. He did not expect Halloween to turn out like this. Lucas, seeing that Dustin wasn't going to answer, jumped in. "Yeah, they do. *But*, don't try to help them get together. Mike would probably die of embarrassment."

"Pfft. 'Course he would."

El came back a few days later. They were all happy to see her, and dutifully ignored Mike's semi-muffled yelling in the other room. Dustin was worried – would Mike fall back into his crush on her? How would that affect Will? But then, Dustin pushed it all aside; he was kind of in the middle of an apocalypse scenario, not really the time or place to be contemplating the relationships of his friends. He turned his full attention onto the situation at hand.

The Snowball came to pass. Mike and El dated for a few months afterwards, before they broke it off, and the explanation they provided to their friends is that they hadn't quite realized what love was actually, and they had thought the bond they had shared was it. They didn't explain how they realized it wasn't love, but Dustin had a few theories. He's extremely glad he won't have to see them holding hands and see Will's face fall out of the corner of his eye anymore. He thinks that maybe, *just maybe*, the thing he's been waiting for for two years might finally happen.

Sometimes, Dustin sees El staring at Mike and Will interacting with a curious look on her face, the same one she gets when she's learning a new word, and he knows that she sees it too. He slides over to where she sits on the couch as inconspicuously as he can, and whispers into her ear. "Don't try to tell them, okay?" She looks quizzically back at him. "Look, it'll probably take a while, but it'll be so much better if we let those two dipshits figure it out by themselves."

She puzzles it over for a few moments, before nodding resolutely. Then, her face breaks into a small smile and she socks him on the arm – a gesture she picked up from Max, although El doesn't quite get that she's supposed to do it lightly – and raises an eyebrow as he nurses his arm. "Dipshit?"

Dustin groans out, "Okay, I've been around Steve a lot, give me a break." The giggle he gets in response makes him drop the annoyed

act and smile at her, a wide toothy (she's still a little amazed that he has teeth) grin.

Mike's scratching at his arm. It's the weekend, and the four boys of the party are lounging in Mike's basement. Steve had just picked Max up; she wanted to stay the night, but Mike's mom hadn't wanted a girl to sleep in the same room as four boys. Mike had tried to convince his mom to let Max sleep in his room for the night, but *apparently* that was even more scandalous. Dustin's pretty sure Max could kick his ass very easily, but he doesn't say anything – he doubts Mike's mom would appreciate it. And so, it's just the four of them; Will had brought over his boombox, the music filling the silence in a way that Dustin appreciates; he doesn't feel any pressure to talk, and for once he just allows himself to be relaxed.

The sound of dull nails scratching against wool stirs him from his drowsy state, and when he looks up, Mike's absentmindedly scratching at his arm. For some reason, that bugs him, and he's got no clue why. His gut is saying something's wrong, though, and Dustin's gut is correct 8 times out of 10, so he tends to trust it. He's just about to ask Mike about it when he sees Will's hand reach over and take hold of Mike's. He looks to their faces, and he can see Mike say "sorry" more than he hears it, and he rests his head on Will's shoulder. Mike starts to fiddle with Will's fingers, instead, and Dustin's looking straight at Will's face when Will looks over to Dustin. He wiggles his eyebrows with a smirk on his lips, and he's expecting the blush that spreads across Will's cheeks. What he's *not* expecting, however, is the big smile and nod he gets. Dustin's eyes widen, and he mouths out *dating*, making sure his mouth movements are clear. Will laughs through his nose, and he nods again. He looks over at Lucas, who must've looked up at some point, because the look on his face matches Dustin's current feelings perfectly. They lock eyes, and big smiles stretch across their faces simultaneously.

Dustin's barely resisting the urge to yell right then and there. He gets up, saying he needs to pee, and locks himself in the bathroom so he can calm down a little. He's still a little amazed they managed to drag it out this long, but he's mostly just happy that they finally stopped being so oblivious (and maybe they got their shit together and finally kissed each other like the idiots they are).

not a lot of angst in this one, but i wanted to set up a sort of backbone for the future stories. hope i didn't butcher dustin too much